

# Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

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## Forestry Commission lifts Red Flag Fire Alert except in Pee Dee counties

COLUMBIA—The South Carolina Forestry Commission is lifting the Red Flag Fire Alert it issued Monday for 32 counties, but is keeping intact its cautionary stance against outdoor burning for 14 counties in the Pee Dee region.

Counties for which the Red Flag Fire Alert remains in effect are Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Kershaw, Lancaster, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter and Williamsburg. The region has 48 uncontrolled fires that have burned nearly 1,500 acres.

### Did you know...?

An astounding 98 percent of all wildland fires are caused by human activities, and escaped debris burns are responsible for nearly 50 percent of them.

South Carolina Forestry Commission firefighters respond to an average of 2,500 wildland fires every year, burning about 18,000 acres annually.

With decreasing wind speeds and wind gusts, combined with rising relative humidities, across much of the state, the fire activity and danger that prompted the Forestry Commission's statewide alert has diminished. With the large number of uncontrolled fires in the Pee Dee, however, the agency is still recommending people postpone their outdoor burning plans in the aforementioned counties.

"Since we started seeing an uptick in ignitions last Thursday, the agency has responded to more than 180 wildfires, including 38 after we issued the Red Flag," said SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones. "The fact that we had so many ignitions speaks to the true danger of outdoor fires escaping easily and spreading rapidly that our alert warned people about."

The purpose of Red Flag Fire Alerts is twofold: in addition to discouraging people from doing any outdoor burning, it also helps to reduce the strain on local fire departments and other first responders who need to remain available for other emergencies.

A Red Flag Fire Alert does not prohibit outdoor burning, provided that all other state and local regulations are followed, but the Forestry Commission strongly encourages citizens to voluntarily postpone any such burning until the alert is lifted. However, a Red Flag Fire Alert does trigger certain county or local ordinances that restrict outdoor fires, so residents should contact their local fire departments to check whether such restrictions apply in their areas.

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*As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects 12.9 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.*